

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS & BRIDGES,
COSBY PARK ROAD
Between State Route 32 and Cosby Campground
Gatlinburg Vicinity
Sevier County
Tennessee

HAER NO. TN-35-J

HAER
TENN
78-GAT.V,
65-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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COSBY PARK ROAD
HAER NO. TN-35-J

HAER
TENN
78-GAT.V
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Location: Great Smoky Mountains National Park,
Tennessee, between State Route 32 and
Cosby Campground

Date of Construction: ca. 1850s (improvement construction by
NPS 1930s-50s)

Type of Structure: Roadway, Bridges, and Landscapes

Use: National Park Transportation System

Engineer: U.S. Bureau of Public Roads and National
Park Service

Fabricator/Builder: Various private and public contractors

Owner: U.S. Department of the Interior,
National Park Service, Great Smoky
Mountains National Park

Significance: The transportation system of Great Smoky
Mountains National Park is
representative of NPS park road design
and landscape planning throughout the
country. Much of the construction work,
including that of the Cosby Park Road,
was undertaken by the Civilian
Conservation Corps during the 1930s.

Project Information: Documentation was conducted during the
summer of 1996 under the co-sponsorship
of HABS/HAER, Great Smoky Mountains
National Park, the National Park Service
Roads and Parkway Program and funded
through the Federal Lands Highway
Program. Measured drawings were
produced by Edward Lupyak, field
supervisor, Matthew Regnier, Karen
Young, and Dorota Sikora (ICOMOS intern,

Poland). The historical reports were prepared by Cornelius Maher and Michael Kelleher. See also drawings and histories on related structures: Great Smoky Mountains National Park, TN-35; Newfound Gap Road, TN-35-A; Clingmans Dome Road, TN-35-B; Little River Road, TN-35-C; Cades Cove and Laurel Creek Roads, TN-35-D; Foothills Parkway, TN-35-E; Cataloochee Valley Road, TN-35-F; Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail, TN-35-G; Big Creek Road, TN-35-H; Northshore Road, TN-35-I; Deep Creek Road, TN-35-K; Greenbrier Road, TN-35-L; Heintooga Ridge and Balsam Mountain Roads, TN-35-M; Cataloochee Trail and Turnpike, TN-35-N; Rich Mountain Road, TN-35-O; Elkmont Road, TN-35-P; Loop Over Bridge, TN-35-Q; Smokemont Bridge, TN-35-R; Elkmont Vehicle Bridge, TN-35-S; and Luten Bridges, TN-35-T.

Introduction

Cosby Park Road is a short 2-mile spur which leads from Tennessee Route 32 at the park boundary to the Cosby Campground and picnic area. The road follows the west side of Cosby Creek as it ascends slowly into the park. At 1-mile, the road passes the Gunther Cemetery, a remnant of the settlement in this area which existed prior to the establishment of the park. Another cemetery is located a short distance up the Snake Den Ridge Trail, the lower section of which was an old road. Other trails which begin in the Cosby area also follow old roads, and the trace of a road is visible along Cosby Creek where the present-day road moves away from the bank of the stream.

Roads on Cosby Creek

Settlements along Cosby Creek date from the 1850s, when crude roads were built up this valley towards Low Gap. Cocke County built an improved road along Cosby Creek sometime in the nineteenth or early twentieth century. However, according to an assessment of Cosby Park Road by the BPR in 1950, the road "in

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its present form dates largely from the CCC era."¹

The CCC began constructing the Cosby Park Road in September 1933,² and completed the project during the winter of 1934.³ In 1938, the Park Service reported the condition of Cosby Park Road to visitors as being "covered with crushed rock," and recommended that the road was not "for the inexperienced or nervous driver."⁴

Despite the CCC's construction of Cosby Park Road, this area remained a little used part of Great Smoky Mountains National Park due to the lack of visitor facilities. Plans to develop facilities in the area began in the 1950s, and in April 1952, L.A. Wilhelm, a Park Service official, inspected the Cosby area.⁵ However, new facilities were not built at Cosby until after the Park Service began the Mission 66 program to improve the infrastructure of all the national parks. The construction of

¹ Inventory and Inspection Report, U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, 1950; Roads Vertical File; GSMNP Library.

² Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1933; GSMNP.

³ Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1933; GSMNP.

⁴ "General Information Regarding Great Smoky Mountains National Park" in Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1938; GSMNP.

⁵ Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1952; GSMNP.

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the Cosby campground was begun in October or November 1955,⁶ and was completed on October 30, 1959.⁷

The improvement of the Cosby entrance road was also a Mission 66 project, and location surveys began on September 24, 1956.⁸ No date is available for the beginning of the improvement of Cosby Park Road, but by March 1957, work was well underway, and the two small bridges on the road were under construction.⁹ The project was finished in 1958 or 1959, prior to the completion of the campground.

⁶ Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1955; GSMNP.

⁷ Superintendent's Monthly Report, October 1959; GSMNP.

⁸ Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1956; GSMNP.

⁹ Superintendent's Monthly Report, March 1957; GSMNP.

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